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POEMS

POEMS

BY

EDWIN CURRAN



BOSTON

THE FOUR SEAS COMPANY

1919

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POEMS

NOTE

Some of these poems have appeared in *The New Republic*, *Harper's Magazine*, *The Century*, *Poetry*, etc.

SPRING, 1920

When oxlips fleck the grass, and roses hide
Their warm blood in the shade to sleep and dream;
When robin songs go down the countryside
Across the valley and the woodland stream;
When spring comes laughing on the world again,
Her hands thrust upward to the burning sun,
Then we shall go to find our warrior men
Who ceased to laugh, who ceased to leap and run.
By hearts of oak who went across the waves
To duty in their prime of peace and mirth,
Who found a marvelous beauty past the sea,
Some place in France we shall bend by their graves
And strew the lovely flowers of the earth
Upon their sleep, far happier there than we.

SHAKESPEARE

Jovial Shakespeare, like the man he was,
Loved every flower in God's marvelous room,
Remembering all the happy bells and grass
And morning spinning like a rose to bloom.
How often did he ramble with the dew
At tip of dawn across the ancient hills,
Plucking the violet, pausing where it grew
To gather bundles of the daffodils.

Full of God's music and the world and time
His consciousness contained eternity,
As old as space and time and earth, and broad—
The world went through his blood to knock; sublime
He reached among the planets and infinity
And laid his hand into the hand of God.

OLD GLORY

Our Flag is out-blown to the ends of earth
And circles all the world where Freedom goes
Within this hour of mankind's rebirth
With its great emblem, Glory's rippled rose.
To the four ends of this embattled sphere,
Shot to the skies with all its dappled bars
Sent rolling to the heaven fair and clear,
Is seen the beauty of the flying Stars.

On England high it rolls along the sky,
With England's flag a flower with a flower;
And while guns blow it joins the flag of France
A rose beside the lily where men die,
A light above all of immortal power,
A flame of everlasting radiance.

NOVEMBER VICTORY

I walked upon the great star-pointing hills
Where they, shot like great arrows to the sky,
Rolled with their towers touching on the blue
And the great sky shook with its mighty laughter.
I heard the great hills tell the silent sun
And speak to all the stars our Victory;
I heard the mountains shout against the dawn
And all the clouds cry like a million bells.

ASHES OF THE SEA

To France when Peace comes all the world will go
And pile rich flowers on the noble dead ;
Build monuments and dazzling marble shafts ;
Songs will be sung and thousands weep on them,
There on France's great immortal battlefields.
But who will rear white marble on the sea ?
Who'll find those graves lost in that solid hill,
That mountain of pure rain that rocks the world ?
It is its own gravedigger and its priest,
And shovels men to sleep with lapping prayer.
Those men will have no flowers on their grave,
No grass grows on the sea, no blossoms fall.
There are no church yards and no chapel chimes ;
No roads where lovely women laugh on by ;
No singing children with arms full of roses ;
No snowy marble marks the silent water.
They hear no music of the whistling birds.

No grass grows on the sea, no flowers fall.
No one will build white mountains on waves.
No one will snow the water with white stones.
The white cap waves will be their only flowers
And be their only monuments that God builds there.
Their tomb will be the mighty bending sky.

AUTUMN IN WARTIME

In ashes lies the lovely rose,
The jonquils blackened on the stem,
The lily withered with its blows
And every bonny gem.
But dust are daffodils outspread,
Each petaled flower dank and curled—
What grief, what crying of the dead
Has brought this sorrow on the world!

Here on the ground the dahlia showers,
No longer leaning on the breeze,
And all the sweet imperial flowers
Drop in this house that spans the seas.
They could not live in so much pain;
Grief fills the house from East to West,
This mighty house that spans the plain
And bends around the skies at rest.

In ashes lies the lovely rose,
The lily wither with its blows
And all the dappled flowers pied
Like ghosts upon each stem,
For all this beauty dropped and died,
Each bonny gem.
They could not keep the bloom and leaf,
They could not live in so much grief.

So every flower, dank and curled,
Dies like the flower of the world.

✓
THE CLOD

I picked up the clod.

"You may yet be a man," I said. "Dream on.

Are you not glad? Do you not tremble?"

But dully it looked at me.

I could swear I heard a sigh of relief.

There was no ecstasy, no joy.

"I have been a man," the clod said.

FIRST FROST

A sparkling sunset, oranged to gold,
Rings like a bell of sorrow told,
Across the night of whistling cold ;
For now an arm swings near and far
The brittle lamp of every star.
The flowers grow in the garden pied
Velvet, imperial, laughing-eyed,
While on them hovers a breath,
The whistling frost of silver death.
I grieve to see the wine-red crowd
And watch and watch them, tall and proud,
And tell them that tonight death comes,
Beating the stars like kettle drums.
For the last time I kiss their breasts,
The lovely golden fleeting guests,
Made sad to think on morning's shore
Their beauty will be nevermore.
I grieve to see them fall and die
Where kindled, burning, sparkling high
The stars make mirrors of the sky.
I bid them farewell in their sleep,
Wrapped now in snowy silver seas,
For they, immortal, will but leap
Like us, to a more marvelous peace.
And here I sit by them and view
The solid sky as white frost comes,
Knocking the winds to silver dew,
Beating the stars like kettle drums.

EACH SOLDIER

When I die, think this heart not dead or blind
But beating still within the human whole;
Think of my thought as turned in all mankind,
Dissolved in it, the universal soul.

When you hear music, know it is my voice;
When you feel happiness, it is my hand
Laid on you; and of your Freedom make rejoice
For that is me still living on your land.

When spring comes up the world I greet you still;
And when the wind walks with you it is I;
And when you hear the nightingale, give ear;
Look on the rose, my heart, death could not kill;
And know my soul is still your Liberty,
The sunshine; and your love and happiness here.

TO FUTURE GENERATIONS

We ancients here are dead a thousand years,
Glorious in our day and happy dead,
The dust that makes your flowers—and your tears
The ashes of your beauty overhead.
You tramp upon us in your splendid prime
Wearing the world, a robe we threw away;
Wearing life, a garment, we had in our time;
Using the house we had, the golden day.

We are the ashes, you, the life that sprang;
Look here upon us in our crumbled temple stones;
Tread down our battlefields where we all now stay;
But think that with archaic harps we sang,
We simple folk who gave the dust our bones,
And loved you all that you might live a day.

Think there of us . . . We send our souls to you,
We send our love a greeting down the years . . .
Unborn, unseen, unknown to our sight.
We loved you there for all centuries through,
You have your laughter, joy, and we but tears,
Yet we are happy, dead . . . For we were Right.

Now we are dead a thousand years and days,
But earth, the rock, the wind that blows the sky,
Yet ringing still we hear your endless praise.
We are the living dead who could not die.

Sweet scholars, statesmen, lovers one and all,
Like you we did not dream that we must pass
Till suddenly we heard the midnight fall
And ere we knew were flowers and the grass.

So when you pluck a rose sometimes but see
Its lovely heart some happy heart of old;
And look upon the field and meadowland
As but our silence in eternity.
And if you feel a rising . . . Know we held
Like you there, emotion and shall understand,
And feel with you there all your ecstasy,
And you will see the waving grass . . . our hand.

TO A BEREAVED WIFE

He does not feel the earth upon his breast
Or hear sweet music or the bells
Of temples, or see the golden west
When spring is in the dells.

Yet—when you see the sunlight, think his eyes
Are on you, and when you feel the wind pass through,
Know that his sweet caress comes from the skies;
And as the golden day, sits there by you.

Look on the flowers, his remembered soul,
And know the moonlight is his kiss returned;
And feel the spring, his love, with you the goal;
And all the lovely stars his eyes you mourned.

Feel there your life as his kind heart you knew
His being living, laughing, there in you.

WINTER NIGHT

The stars like bells flash down the silver sky,
Taking the valleys with a holy glowing light,
And ringing like chimes on frozen trees, to cry
Along the marble ground of the iron night.
Solid are the stars and solid the world and hills,
Locked in frozen chains and dappled snow;
Fields of steel, as beautiful as daffodils
As moonlight flecks, deceiving them with glow.

The sky is full of flowers, white and pure,
And near, the sea rocks ribbons to the sand.
Bubbles full of stars are there and the moon's hull.
No nightingale gives whistle on the shore
But yet God laughs along the shingle strand,
Making death itself seem marvelously beautiful.

THE DEAD SOLDIER

Dissolving back into the universe,
I have become the field and wind and rock,
Melting into the body of the whole,
Melting into the substance whence I came
One with the stone, the air,
Taking on the garment of the dreamless field.

I now feel what it is to be those things
I looked upon and touched before I died.
All that I was not once I am;
All that surrounded me I have become.

I am dissolved now with the earth and sky,
Being space and moonlight and the dreamless wind,
Taking on the consciousness of earth,
Feeling as the grass, the bending trees, the light,
Feeling as the glittering summer sun.
I came back to the universe I knew,
The great womb that I stumbled from.
I feel as flowing rivers and the clouds,
I feel as the spinning earth and falling rain,
I feel as all the sky and all the space,
Dissolved back into all and being all.

Grieve not for me, I feel you with the world,
I feel you with the earth; you stand on me.
I feel you with the wind that wraps you round.
Do not shed tears for I am on all sides.
Which way you look these things I have become.

You are within my greater being now.
When you hear music, know that it is me ;
When you look on the flowers, I am them.
Your joyful moments, too, I have become.
I am the love of lovers and their dreams ;
I am now happy past all words and thoughts,
Feeling a deep exquisite joy to be.
I am the dead soldier now dissolved.
I am the world, I am the dreamless things.
Grieve not for me who know such marvelous peace.
I am far happier now than you.

THE CLOUD

The sky is calling me to go
Down through the valleys of the sun;
Forever must I journey so
And spin and run.

Playfellow of the stars, I leap
Among their crowds and ring the moon
Seeking in its cradle to find sleep
Some midnight noon.

I toss the roving winds like grain
And let them spin and spill
Across the arching plain
Of time's blue hill.

I live in this blue mountain bent
The sky, on earth its floor
So round and huge, the firmament,
A mighty purple door.

My road is through it, God's great way
Chisled out of space and curled,
And spreading out my wings all day
I whistle round the world.

SAILING OF COLUMBUS

The wind ran out across the golden sea,
Chained to our snowy shrouds, pulling our ships,
A slave who creaked the beams and dragged the hulls
Like plows along the waves in creams of foam.
On down the watery field, the hill of rain,
We stumbled on the wind, leaning on the sky,
Running into eternity and blue space,
Trying to touch that azure wall ahead.
On to the blue gate locked across the world
We climbed the slippery alleys of the sea—to it.
Its bolt seemed as the golden sun hung there ahead,
Its locks and bars the chisled clouds of white;
At night it hung there, studded with bright stars,
Drove in its purple planks, like silver nails,
Its hinges swung out on eternity.
On to that gate, there on the pivot stars,
We finally ran with Hope, as God's great key,
And grappling with the locks, opened a world.

AFTER THE MARNE

A furious snow fell like white rain
Upon Fair France,
Where men lay white and still and slain.
Poor France, poor France.

The driving milk leaped down in clouds
And whirled and whirled,
While France lay dazzling in her shrouds
To all the world.

White sheets with sheets the snow still fell
In brilliant showers,
Like sweet white roses, bell with bell,
And fragrant showers.

The petals scattered wide and spread
On France, Fair France;
Milk white and blowing on the dead;
And not a figure raised his head.
Poor France, poor France.

And there upon that winter day
God covered Christ up as he lay.
Poor France, poor France.

AUTUMN

The music of the autumn winds sings low,
Down by the ruins of the painted hills,
Where death lies flaming with a marvelous glow,
Upon the ashes of the rose and daffodils.
But I can find no melancholy here,
To see the naked rocks and thinning trees;
Earth strips to grapple with the winter year;
I see her gnarled hills plan for victories!

I love the earth who goes to battle now,
To struggle with the wintry whipping storm
And bring the glorious spring out from the night.
I see earth's muscles bared, her battle brow,
And am not sad, but feel her marvelous charm
As splendidly she plunges in the fight.

TO WORKERS OF THE RED CROSS

Do not knit worry in your golden yarn
Lest men who wear it feel the worry there
Beside the beauty of the golden graves,
And too the dead might feel it still aware.
Do not sew anguish in the Red Cross bands
Lest it rub in the wounds of the chevaliers
And make them raw with agony and tears
And torture them in distant battlelands.

Do not let fear creep in the goods you sew
Lest it should travel on the ships afar
And break the men who need strong hearts of steel
And there unman them where the cannon blow;
But kiss the cloth, that those who wear may feel
The kiss of courage on them like a star.

THE AMERICAN ARMY

These men will march forever and forever,
A golden host down history's every page,
Down every story, and will perish never
But move through every age, its heritage.
As long as there is heaven like a bowl
Of upturned sunlight will these legions move
Through hearts of beauty and through hearts of love,
Down through the deathless, endless human soul.

Down every tale, down every golden story,
These marching millions like young chevaliers
Will still go moving out across the years
With songs that ring the centuries to glory,
Never to die though earth grow gray and hoary,
But live forever, gods of smiles and tears.

THE MARCH THAW

On—turgid, bellowing—tramp the freshet rills
 Heaped up with yellow wine, the winter's brew.
Out-thrown, they choke and tumble from the hills,
 And lash their tawny bodies, whipping through.
With flattened bells comes scudding purple rain;
 The cold sky breaks and drenches out the snow.
 Far from the perfect circle of the sky
 The heavy winds lick off the boughs they blow;
And fields are cleansed for plows to slice again,
 For April will laugh downward by and by.

With purifying blasts the wind stalks out
 And sweeps the carrion of winter on;
It prods the dank mists, stamps with jest about
 And sows the first blooms on the greening lawn.
Far up the planks of sky the winter's dross
 Goes driven to the north; her rank smells wave
 In unseen humors to the icy pole.
 The charwomen of the sky, with blushes lave
And wash the fields for green, and rocks for moss,
 And busily polish up the earth's dull soul.

THE HEALING OF THE WORLD

When this wild butchery at last is through,
God will heal up the battered breast of earth,
Will bandage it with sunlight and with mirth,
Will wash it with the rain and stars and dew.
God, the sweet Doctor of the centuries,
With medicine of trees and roses here
And emerald sward, will blind the bleeding sphere,
Efface the crimson cuts with herbs of peace.

Some day God's kiss, the springtime, will return
To paint the ground with flowers where men die,
To cool and soothe and heal each mangled place.
Bloomed into fire the cherry trees will burn;
Glad birds will sing back sunshine through the sky,
And God will bathe in flowers earth's scarred
face.

THE RED CROSS

There is a light that darkens out the sun,
A beautiful light that fills the earth to-day,
A light that cannot die or pass away
Or be snuffed out by sword, or shell or gun.
A radiance goes round the world this hour,
Immortal beauty with its deathless glow
That folds the planet like a golden flower
As pure as dawning and as white as snow.

Beneath this light the broken world finds peace;
The crumbs and ashes of this sphere of war
Touched with this radiance find beauty new;
There is a light that circles round the seas,
An omnipresent and enchanting star,
The one that stood on Bethlehem and grew.

The Red Cross Nurse, the Queen of all the Earth,
Goes gently through her empire robed in white,
A watcher over gods that lie abed,
The broken chevaliers caught in their flight;
And she is proud to be with such true men,
So close to them the heart of life and God,
Amid such glory in the lands abroad,
So close to knighthood flowering there again.

She feels the glad sweet sorrow of war's way,
Its deep immortal sadness past all words ;
Yet from a broken heart she cheers each brother,
The sweetest woman in the world to-day,
The best dressed, and her voice is like the birds,
To golden men, a comrade and a mother.

SEEKING THE INFINITE

We flare up like a flame, then leave our ashes ;
Make wild and passionate blaze in some art here,
In some work, calling, then all leaps and crashes
And from the fire the dust and crumbs appear.
Yet while we live we are a molten pool
Brimmed with a light to glow our circle round
Or flash throughout the world, then sink to cool.
A few flakes fall into the waiting ground.

But we must flame and set afire our hearts,
Explode in some profession or some art ;
Leap up and gleam here for a passing hour ;
We must or we would die of misery ;
And so we kindle these few crumbs in flower
And crackle, blazing, ere we cease to be.

THE DEAD AIRMAN

The skies are lonely now you are not there,
An eagle mounting, climbing with the sky,
Your wings upon the stars of silver spun
Or floating sliding down the slanting air.
Now there is something missing from the blue,
A small white cloud that should be with the rest,
An eagle with the eagles on their quest,
A star among the stars, that grieve for you.
The tent is lonely for its flower gleaming;
The winds miss you, their comrade high and close,
Their friend and roamer down the cosmic ways
And in the silence they look on you dreaming
And drop a chance star on your grave, a rose
Each evening as they count the passing days.

THE DEAD OF FRANCE

The great guns care so little for the dead;
The wild shells do not mind them where they dream
And live and sleep in every golden bed;
For bullets crack in one eternal stream
Above them past all harm of war or death
And show no courtesy to those below;
The great whirlwind blows on its mighty breath
Unminding those who heed no winds that blow.

The guns forget the dead they quickly kill
And hold for them no reverence or respect,
But rather laugh upon them where they lie,
To gloat upon their conquered in each hill,
Unknowing that those ashes they have wrecked
In earth will live on when all great guns die.

THAT GOLDEN SPRINGTIME

That golden springtime ere he went to war
The roses and the blowing daffodils
Like May's sweet fingers waved him from the hills
A glad farewell across the evening star.
Far flakes of swallows sliding down the sky
Gave whistle too, farewell like lark and wren.
The nightingale sang sweet adieu again;
The sunset's red kerchief waved him good-bye.

The cricket blew her tiny horn for him;
The very roses cried with drops of dew;
The lilacs in the garden ceased to dance;
And soon there like a flower he grew dim
Across the verge and melted in the blue,
And God and springtime went with him to France.

And soon when he comes marching home in peace
The sleeves of cherry trees in bloom will wave,
The welcoming lilies and the lilacs rave,
And robins greet him with their melodies.
The roses in the rain will laugh and dance
When he comes marching home again from France.

"Y" BRIDGE, ZANESVILLE, OHIO

Its three gray arches throw their triple wings
Across the flashing river like a bird,
A great gray bird of concrete as it springs
Above the waves that like soft bells are heard.
It spreads its concrete pinions bank to bank,
Some eagle standing where the rivers wed,
A mighty figure in the rocky bed
Where silver waters roll and dash and clank.

Its three great wings leap out across the stream,
Gray arrows soaring river side by side
As though an eagle spread its pinions wide
And stood there with its wings as in a dream,
Its triple pinions grappling with the river
That under it will flow to God forever.

THE HILL

I do not think this great old hill is dead.
Its arms reach upward in a hundred trees ;
Its shoulders touch the stars far overhead ;
Within its heart there beat the centuries.
This mighty hill has some deep life I know.
Out of its veins come springs in silver showers,
The hoarded treasure that its pulses flow.
Its eyes look from a thousand peering flowers.
Through every leaf it draws its mighty breath,
Through every pore of earth it drinks the sky.
Its marble breast can never know of death.
It watches from its grass the moments fly.
It has a soul, it has a dream of things
Like some vast god bent in its folded wings.

HALLOWE'EN

Awake, dead men, dead women, and dead dreams!
The witches' moon flames down the western sky;
The wild graves empty, phantoms troop in streams;
The haunted stars are giving forth a cry.
The covers of the earth roll back their doors;
The rank green grave-grass lets its prisoners stray.
Far ghostly lights are dancing on the moors:
The wandering souls hold dead man's holiday.

Dead mothers and dead babies walk to-night.
The pixies join the fairy and the elf.
The ogres have their wings, and Pan himself
Is tripping over earth as waving light.
The wild winds shout and though the dark is seen
The marching dead, for this is Hallowe'en.

MAY

God smiles on earth and skylarks sing
And life is beautiful in spring.

The purple finch, the oriole,
Like little stars in heaven roll.

Though valleys green of oak and ash
The distant rivers burn and flash.

The oak tree in its silver mail
Is like a tower in the dale.

Each hill and every valley sings;
The sky is but a lake of wings.

The wood smoke mounts upon the air
As though earth sent to God a prayer.

Out from the cherry tree in white
Vast blossoms fall like stars of light.

Though forests with their shadow walls
The fireflies light the emerald halls.

The trout leap up on silver wings,
And splashing back the water rings.

SOUTH WINDS

The warm south winds roll up so full of sleep,
Full of Kentucky flowers and the smells
Of old Virginia roses that they keep,
The sugar winds from sunny southern dells.

The sweet south wind chimes down across the hills,
The harbinger of spring where skies are dark
To sow the stars across the daffodils
And toss across the sun the whistling lark.

The south wind rolls like wheels along the skies,
A dream of spring, a flash of far Gulf climes,
An incense and a fragrance in our eyes,
A rustle in the boughs like silver chimes.
Like bells it comes now singing down the dales
And brings upon its wings the nightingales.

OFFICER'S DIARY

How often have I watched day on the hills
Walk on with burnished feet into the night
And hang pale glittering ghosts upon their sills,
The stars of white.

How often have I thought on leagues of dead,
The human glories sprawled like casks of wine,
And seen the poor grapes bleed their little red
For God's design.

How often have I heard the homeless boys
Cry for their mothers in their golden pain
With thoughts that from their ashes would spring joys
Of mankind's gain.

In Flanders I have watched the sickled moon
Swing out her sword and cut the stars to sleep,
Her silver bayonet in the midnight noon
Cleaving the deep.

And at my feet lay tons of flesh and clay,
Poor ashes, dust, and ruins with no gleam,
The remnants of a world that blew away
Into a dream.

Yes, I have seen it all, the bitter death,
The agony of a planet there abroad:
But through the hideous war there seemed the breath
Of some good God.

I have heard men scream for their native land,
Tears in their eyes, and wounds like roses red:
But through it all I learned to understand
God is not dead.

THE SHAMROCK

Thou springest in an April hour
Like a light, thou bonny flower,
And as I take thee in my hand
I feel the heart of Ireland
Beat from thy emerald green to me
A music and a melody.
I hear her songs within thee ringing,
I hear her life within thee singing,
And as I hold thee in my hand
I hold the soul of Ireland.

Shamrock, thou art Ireland's heart!
Of all her hopes and dreams a part,
Shadow of her thoughts I see
Growing upward splendidly,
And as I hold thee in my hand
I hold the heart of Ireland.

Yet there is pain within thy breast,
The crying of thy long unrest,
For in my hand it beat to me
Thy everlasting agony.
The April rains have washed thee clean,
Living Shamrock, jewel of green,
Yet left their drops on thee like tears—
Thy weeping of a thousand years.
Each drop of dew upon thee lies
A tear drop out of Ireland's eyes.

These trickle wetly on my hand,
Warm with the grief of Ireland:
For she has always wept and cried,
A nation always crucified;
A people's broken dreams of place,
The human slavery of a race,
The crying of a land for light,
The crying of a land for Right!

But though men crush thee, bonny flower,
They can never shake thy power;
For thy three leaves of green uncurled
Have gone around the living world,
Have circled earth and human things,
Have folded man in thy three wings.

O Shamrock springing from the sod,
I see in thee the heart of God:
For where would that be safe in part,
God's heart, if not in Ireland's heart?
Where could the presence be this hour
If not in thee, immortal flower,—
Flower out of Ireland's birth,
Flower of the flower of the earth?

Still April rain upon thee lies,
Still like tears from Ireland's eyes,
Still her grief and still her pain
That will be long as April rain.

Never ending, ceasing never,
She must cry and cry forever
And, come each April, through the years
Thy dew will be as Ireland's tears.

But, Shamrock, thy tears hold some mirth,
Thou fairest flower of the earth,
The sweetest, dearest, loveliest thing
That ever God set flowering.

In thee sweet beauty ever beams,
In thee the soul of Emmet dreams;
In thee Tom Moore still sings and grieves;
Parnell is whispering in thy leaves;
O'Connell is within thee curled,
And Ireland's dead throughout the world
All buried in the Shamrock, all,
Where still sound harps through Tara's hall.

Is it not time that thou wert free?
Did not Who made the rose make thee?
Who made the lily white and rare,
Did He not make thee still more fair?
Who made the rose so fresh and new,
Did He not make thee, Shamrock, too?

Oh! toss thy petals to the stars,
Fair flower full of many scars
Be brave, born of a land denied;
The world's first Belgium crucified.

Be brave, Louvain of the western sea,
Did not what crushed out Rheims crush thee?

O Shamrock, Shamrock, dry thy tears!
The weeping of a thousand years!
O ravished land, O broken star!
Thy history has been one long war;
And still the dew upon thee lies,
Still the grief of Ireland cries.
Will no one try to dry thy tears,
The weeping of a thousand years?

CHRIST

I

That night, earth's greatest and most beautiful one,
The sky bent to the manger with still lips.
The universe sat watching with its stars.

A dazzling drapery of silver fire
Hung like a curtain to the marvelous spot.
The soul of all creation held its breath,
Leaned over with dumb time to watch the scene.
A hush locked silence to the silver hills
Where all infinity bent down in wonderment.
There was an hour that a man might love.

Up to the crossroads of the world and time
Where old eternity stood pausing at the forks
Made mute to see the past and present part,
A shape came out of time and space, to be
A thing of beauty and a joy forever,
Topping the world with music not to cease,
Far lovelier than the rose, sweeter than song.

There came a sense never to die or pass,
A thought that has enfolded all the world,
A light for all the darkness that can be,
A star for all the world to follow after.

That hour was the hinge where being turned;
There history drew back from the deep abyss;
There all creation pivoted and swam
Out from the night, and all the darkened past
Into the splendid beauty of the sun.
There as a flower bursts Christ was born.

Rocked in His mother's arms, He seemed a light,
A dream she had, a happy living dream.
More lovely grew His eyes, more fair His form;
His tongue found childlike music and first words.
His lips kissed her lips and He laughed to be—
The Mother and the Child the ages love.

Running in the golden sun, He found the world;
He loved the flowers, streams, the rain and birds;
He loved the beauty of the golden afternoon;
He saw the stars like lilies shine at night
And ring Judea with their silver wonder.
He grew to be a happy and a noble man;
He loved the world and all the world loved Him;
And every star shone on Him, proud it could.

Strong and beautiful He grew before His God,
A youth of music and a youth of song,
One finding life a miracle and a hope,
One finding being as a marvelous joy.
He laughed along the world and had His day,
Happy as the glory of eternal summer.

A peace was in His blood with all the world
And life like bells tapped on His heart and brain;
To live was music, and His consciousness
Held earth and beauty, and alone with these
He was as one, dissolved in glorious youth.

He loved the sunlight that hung on the grass
And swung across the skies a hill of gold;
The dappled shadows were as wine to Him.
He loved the rose and sought her crimson blossoms
In forest halls where happy flowers grew.
He roamed the dells of Israel and found
The skylark and the nightingale in peace.
The whistles of the birds came as soft flutes
And pierced His ears with golden song and bells.
So finally he burst into the prime of man.

Life was to Him a glorious beautiful thing,
Full of earth's fire and full of God and time,
A mystery in a mystery in a dream.
His soul contained the world and universe;
He was a man to match the stars and sun,
To match the ocean and eternity,
To match the world, the mountains, and His God.

His eyes burned like great jewels and His love.
He seemed to know, and look beyond to-morrow,
And see the marvelous destiny He had:

He saw the great inevitable roll forth
And finally what came like a piercing cry.
The world was broken—it called out for God,
And He went up to Calvary to die.

II

The play was short, the tragedy was deep;
The stage was earth, the actor was our God.

With no complaint Christ mounted up the hill,
One staggering, laboring with the happy Tree,
One lifting mankind with Him as He rose,
One lifting all the world with every step.

On top the sky the rabble finally paused,
Where all the Hebrew world lay sprawled below
In mellow hills, and running rich with green,
To kiss the blue skies that bent curved around.
There lay the wave of land in ocean space
And He upon its crest pierced on its tip.
The Cross much like a hand reached to the skies;
There shot its finger, lifted straight to God,
An Arrow that went through the heart of God
And pointing to eternity and time, with Him
A shape forever sacred to the world,
A form of marvelous beauty past all things.

He linked the beams there to Himself and hung
As all the sky dropped down with startled dusk

And winds went flapping by with blackened wings;
The rustling air like ebon sliding silk
Kissed on His face and panting heaving breast,
Caressed His limbs, and swam on wandering by.

He leaned against the world and felt its pain;
Felt all its sorrow and its grief to come;
That hour of the years that would need Him;
Felt all its pain and all its love and joy,
Felt all its generations cry to Him.

The earth began to tremble, made alive,
Rolled breathing like an animal below,
Tossed like a ship in some illimitable sea,
Rocked, pulsing, shaking with its monstrous sides.

But bolted to the sky in silence there
He made no word or cry but loved man still,
There standing on the nails, and space and time.
Rocks split and terror shuffled down the earth;
The graves yawned and weird ceremonies unwrapped;
From burying grounds came laughter and mad song.

But silent there He suffered in the night,
One flying in the gale, rocked in the storm,
One shackled to the mountain and the sky,
One locked and chained to all the clapping winds,
And drowned in whistles of the storm and rain.
The lightning silvered down His beautiful shape
Like shining liquid poured on ivory,
White plating the sculpture of the marvelous man.

Then someone cut a rose upon His breast
And there it hung a dappled crimson flower,
The rose He tossed of Hope to all mankind.

III

O Sentinel! where is the morning on the world?
Break, break the night for night has slept too long.
Where is the dawn? Is her rose still uncurled?
Unburst it! Let us have a harp and song.

Sentinel, break the night with a golden spear—
Why does it stand out in the field as one
Who clings to all the earth with craven fear,
Pushing with his shoulder on the rising sun?

Sentinel, unlock the morning from its chains;
Throw by the bolts from off the eastern door;
Unlock the portal hinging on the plains
And let the dawn gate loose its golden store.

Sentinel, the wings of morning wait somewhere
To break the night upon the world of men,
Somewhere that golden hearth crackles in the air.
Sentinel, tap the sky for day again.

Sentinel, knock upon that eyeless wall,
And whistle sunrise down the hills with light.
The world grows weary and sends up its call,
A voice that shrills on through this dreadful night.

The wind beats like a black bird down the skies,
Death flapping on unheeding men's sad cries.

Sentinel leaning on the stars, on watch above,
You will not fail us bending overhead.
Let burst the mountain like a flower of love,
A rose there from Your breast of brilliant red;
For from it must come dawn upon the world,
From that wound must the morning be unfurled.

O Sentinel, burst the morning out with song,
The dreadful eyeless night has slept too long.

Ring out cathedral bells with glorious light!
Sentinel, lift Your spear and break the night!

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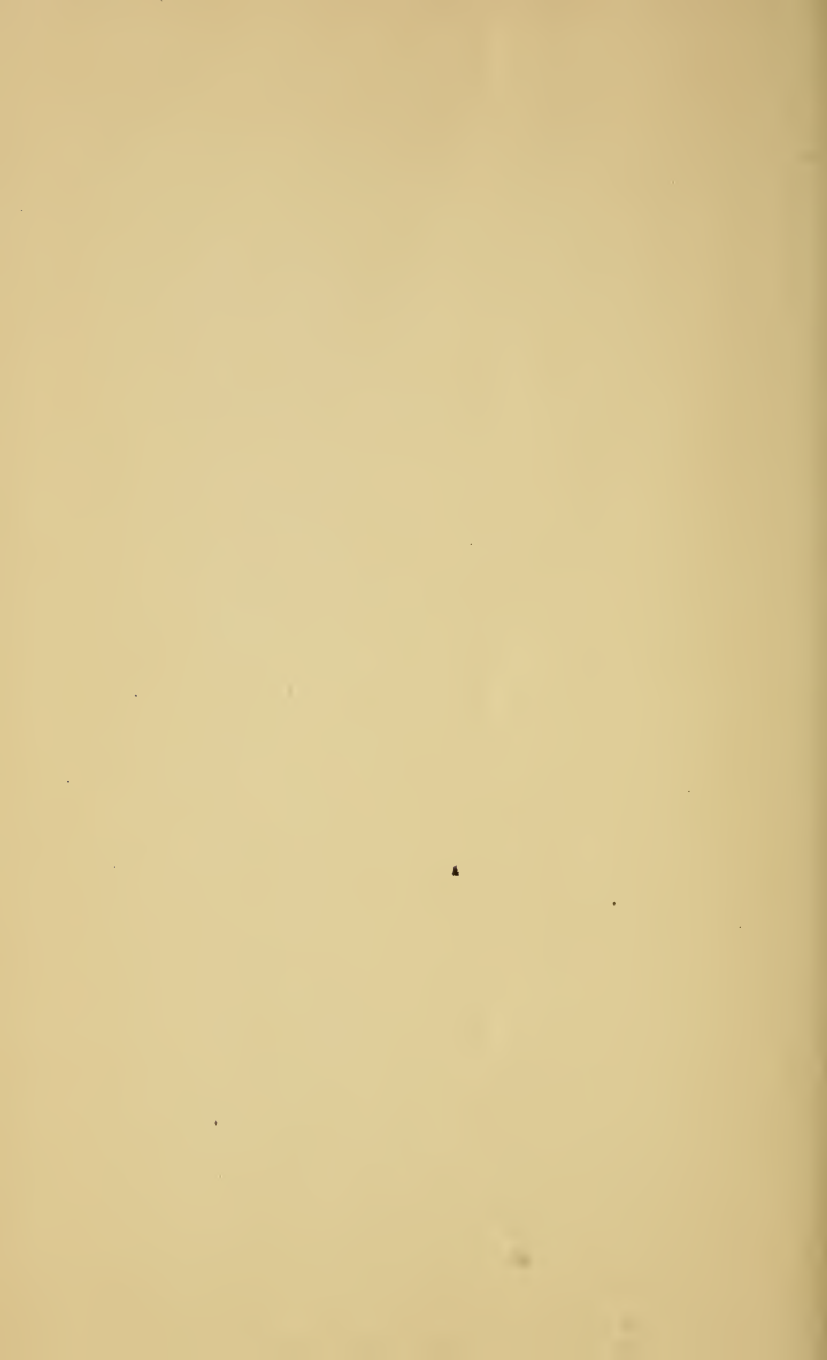
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